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Exploration of Lake Superior; the voyages
of Radisson and Groseilliers, by Henry
Cohn Campbell. Milwaukee 1896.
Parkman Club Publications, no 2.

RADISSON AND GROSEILLIERS.

Daring and hardy far more than most of those voyageurs who have filled the annals of the Northwest with romance and adventure, Pierre-Esprit Radisson and Medard Chouart des Groseilliers are to the history of the Lake Superior country what Jean Nicolet is to the history of the Lake Michigan region.

A few words about the first visits of white men to the upper lakes. In 1634 Nicolet,¹ leaving his home on the St. Lawrence River, ascended the Ottawa River to Lake Nipissing and descended French River to Lake Huron, whence he went as far north as Sault Ste. Marie. Without, so far as history records, catching a glimpse of the great fresh water sea which pours its flood over those falls, Nicolet turned his face westward, in search of the Orient, and came to our own state, ascending the Fox River as far, perhaps, as Berlin.²

Just twenty years later, following in the footsteps of Nicolet, there came to Wisconsin two nameless voyageurs, who, according to the Jesuit Relations of 1656, returned to Quebec in August of that year from a voyage of two years to the region of Green Bay. In the Jesuit Relations of 1658 we learn more about this voyage, but on the whole the details are so meager that one becomes curious as to just how and where the explorers spent the two years of their daring pilgrimage.

In August, 1660, as we learn from the Jesuit Relations of that year, there returned to Quebec two nameless voyageurs who had explored the southern shore of Lake Superior, had visited the Hurons—fugitives first from the Iroquois and then from the Sioux—near the headwaters of the Black River, in northwestern Wisconsin, and who had been guests of honor in the skin lodges and mud cabins of the Sioux of northern Minnesota, these latter Indians, by the way, having most copiously wept over the Frenchmen, a custom that Radisson is the first writer to describe.

For more than two hundred years the two Frenchmen who were the pioneer explorers of Lake Superior have remained nameless. It is now certain that they were Radisson and Groseilliers. The identity of the earlier explorers, they who visited the Green Bay region

1. Butterfield, "Discovery of the Northwest in 1634."

2. Thwaites, "The Story of Wisconsin."

between 1654 and 1656, is by no means so clear; in fact, it may never be positively known. But there is some evidence that they also were Radisson and Groseilliers.

Radisson was the son of Sebastian-Hayet Radisson and Madeleine Herault and he was a native of St. Malo, in Brittany. Although he was a mere youth when on May 21, 1651, he settled with his parents at Three Rivers, on the St. Lawrence, nearly midway between Quebec and Montreal, and although one Elizabeth Radisson became a bride in 1657, some writers assert that Elizabeth was our explorer's daughter. It appears that at Three Rivers at that time there was another Pierre-Esprit Radisson,³ who, with his wife, had come from a parish in Paris. Sulte, a French-Canadian historian, states⁴ that the elder Pierre-Esprit Radisson was our explorer's father, whose widow married Sebastian Hayet, by whom she had three daughters, Marguerite, Francoise and Elizabeth. Against this theory are the facts that Radisson was not out of his teens when he arrived in New France in 1651 and that his sister Marguerite, who must have been his junior according to Sulte's theory, became a wife in 1646. The truth seems to be that the elder Pierre-Esprit Radisson was an uncle of Marguerite and Francoise and of our explorer, and that he was the father of Elizabeth.⁵

Groseilliers was born in Brie, France, of humble parents, and in his boyhood served a family in Tours, a member of which, Sister Bernard, accompanied Mother Mary of the Incarnation, a name illustrious in the religious history of New France, to America. Groseilliers himself came to America some time before he was twenty-one years of age and entered the service of the Jesuits in the capacity of *donne*, or volunteer lay helper, remaining with them a number of years. In 1646, having become familiar with the region lying between the French settlements and Lake Huron, as well as conversant with the Huron and Algonkin languages, he engaged in the fur trade with the Huron Indians.

Groseilliers was married twice and both of his weddings possess much interest. On September 3, 1647, he married Helene Martin, a daughter of Abraham Martin, whose name is borne by the historic plains of Quebec. She, the widow of Claude Etienne at the time that she married Groseilliers, was a goddaughter of the great Champlain, who had given to her the Christian name of his own wife. She died in 1651, and on August 24, 1663, Groseilliers married Marguerite Radisson, also a widow, the elder sister of the man who was destined to be his almost inseparable companion.

Radisson has given us a record of his wanderings, but it was not until 1885 that his journal was published, the credit for this valuable

3. Dionne, "Chouart et Radisson," *Memoirs of the Royal Society of Canada*, 1893.

4. *Histoire des Canadiens-francais*.

5. Dionne.

contribution to American history being due to the Prince Society of Boston. The manuscript of Radisson's first four voyages, including two journeys to the west in company with Groseilliers, are in the Bodleian Library, while his narratives of subsequent experiences at Hudson Bay are in the British Museum. Before they were lodged in these secure places, the Radisson manuscripts were nearly lost at one time, being treated as worthless, but they were finally rescued by collectors.⁶

Radisson's first voyage was as a captive into the country of the Mohawks, by whom he was captured during the year following his arrival in New France, while he was hunting along the St. Lawrence River; his second voyage, also an individual experience, was as a member of the French colony among the Onondagas, another Iroquois nation; his third voyage was a journey that he says that he and Groseilliers made to the west, including a descent far down the Mississippi River, and his fourth voyage was a journey that he and Groseilliers made along the south shore of Lake Superior to northern Wisconsin and northeastern Minnesota.

Our interest naturally centers in the two western voyages. It is a peculiar fact that Radisson does not give the year in which he and Groseilliers started upon or returned from either of their western journeys. But in his account of the second western voyage, he makes allusions to contemporaneous events, and with these guides, and some other evidence which is at hand, the exact day that his second western voyage, the one to Lake Superior, came to an end, can be established with absolute certainty. It becomes necessary to consider this second voyage before taking up the Mississippi River narrative.

There is a conflict of authority as to the route that Radisson and Groseilliers took in coming west the second time. Two French-Canadian writers,⁷ one of them⁸ the most recent contributor to the literature of the subject, state that they followed the lower lakes, visiting Niagara Falls, navigating Lake Erie and passing the spot where now stands the city of Detroit. These writers base their theory upon an exaggerated description by Radisson of a waterfall that they passed in coming west. It is plain, however, that Radisson means to state that he and Groseilliers came west both times by the Ottawa River route. Radisson says that they ascended the "river of the meadows," crossed "the lake of the castors" and descended the "river of the Sorcerers" to the "first great lake." In the Jesuit Relations we find that the Ottawa River was in those days called the River of the Prairies,

6. See Wis. Hist. Colls., Vol. XI., pp. 64 and 65, for an account of the history of these MSS.

7. Dionne; L. A. Frud'homme, St. Boniface, Manitoba, "Notes Historiques sur la vie de P. E. Radisson," published in 1892.

8. Dionne.

which Radisson, writing in English, changed into "river of the meadows," prairie in French and meadow in English being synonymous; the "lake of the castors" that Radisson mentions is plainly Lake Nipissing—Radisson says that it was thirty leagues in compass; the Nipissing Indians, who lived along French River, were called Sorcerers by the French, hence Radisson's "river of the Sorcerers"; Radisson's "first great lake" is most certainly Lake Huron, the first great lake that the French encountered in coming west by way of the Ottawa.

At the mouth of French River, Radisson and Groseilliers, who had left the French settlements contrary to the mandate of the French king's representatives at Quebec, turned their faces westward and were soon at Sault Ste. Marie, where they rested and feasted. Radisson says that at that place they found the truth of what the Indians had often said, that they "should make good cheare of a fish that they call Assickmack, wch signifieth a white fish. The beare, the castors, and ye Oriniack showed themselves often, but to their cost; indeed, it was to us like a terrestriall paradise." From the Sault the explorers went to Chequamegon Bay. Radisson gives us very clear descriptions of the places that they passed on the way, including the Grand Portal, to which he gave his Christian name, and Keweenaw Bay and Keweenaw Point. They portaged across Keweenaw Point. Their Huron companions, who had accompanied them all the way from the lower St. Lawrence, left them at Chequamegon Bay to visit their own nation, which at that time dwelt in northwestern Wisconsin, some distance inland. On the shore of Chequamegon Bay, near Whittlesey's Creek or Shore's Landing,⁹ Radisson and Groseilliers built a little hut, the first structure erected by white men on Lake Superior. Radisson's description of it is interesting. He says: "We went about to make a fort of stakes, wch was in this manner. Suppose that the water side had ben in one end; att the same end there should be murtherers, and att need we made a bastion in a triangle to defend us from an assault. The doore was neare the watter side, our fire was in the midle, and our bed on the right hand, covered. There were boughs of trees all about our fort layed across, one uppon an other. Besides these boughs, we had a long cord tyed wth some small bells, wch weare senteryes."

Within two weeks fifty Hurons came and escorted the two white men to their village, which was situate five great days' journey inland, probably near Court Oreilles. After the usual winter hunt, the Hurons and the explorers met again near a small lake and soon a large number of Ottawas joined them. Five hundred of these Indians died of famine and Radisson's description of the scenes of horror that

9. The Rev. Chrysostom Verwyst, O. S. F., in *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, Vol. XIII., pp. 433, 434.

were enacted in that dismal winter camp, where now may be one of the flourishing towns of northwestern Wisconsin, would be hard to excel in graphic power. They ate the bark of trees, powder made of bones, filthy furs. "We became the image of death," Radisson writes. "We mistook ourselves very often, taking the living for the dead and ye dead for the living." Later in the winter, after a storm had brought relief from famine, by making it possible for them to hunt, the Frenchmen and their Indian companions wandered into the Sioux country, between the St. Croix and upper Mississippi Rivers, and were visited by the Sioux. Somewhere in that country, according to Radisson, they built a fort 600 by 603 feet. From the fort Radisson visited the Christinoes, at three days' journey, and he and Groseilliers spent six weeks in a Sioux camp which was seven days' journey from the big fort. They returned to Chequamegon Bay before Lake Superior was free of ice and Radisson says that from that point they went to the Bay of the North, as Hudson's Bay was called by the French in those days. Radisson speaks of finding on the shore of Hudson's Bay barracks that Europeans had built, and there is no doubt that he claims for himself and Groseilliers the discovery of Hudson's Bay by an inland route. He says that they returned from the northern bay by another river than that by which they had reached it. About the middle of winter they reached the big fort in northern Minnesota and during the following summer they returned to the French settlements.

This voyage terminated in August, 1660, and Radisson and Groseilliers are the two nameless explorers of Lake Superior whose achievements are recorded in the Jesuit Relations of that year. Almost every writer on the subject maintains that it was the first western voyage of Radisson and Groseilliers which terminated at this time, but Radisson himself says that in returning from the Lake Superior voyage he and Groseilliers passed the Long Sault, on the Ottawa River, very soon after the massacre of Dollard and his companions by the Iroquois, a memorable event in early Canadian history which occurred in May, 1660. Moreover, on the outward voyage, when he gave his own name to the Grand Portal, he says that he was the first Christian that had seen it, a statement that would not be true had the Lake Superior voyage taken place at a later date, for Father Menard, the first clergyman to set foot upon Wisconsin soil, passed the Pictured Rocks of Lake Superior in the fall of 1660.¹⁰ With the exception of his story about going to Hudson Bay, Radisson's narrative of his Lake Superior voyage tallies with what the Jesuit Relations say about the two nameless explorers and the places they saw, the Indians whom they visited and the customs of those Indians.

The situation, summed up briefly, is simply this: The Jesuit Relations tell us of two Frenchmen who went to the head of Lake Supe-

10. Jesuit Relation, 1663.

rior, visited the Hurons and the Sioux and returned in August, 1660. Radisson describes a similar journey by himself and Groseilliers and while he makes no direct statement of the time of his return, his narrative shows that it was in the summer of 1660. Finally, the Journal of the Jesuits, a sort of diary kept at Quebec, sets at rest any possible doubt on the subject by mentioning the arrival of the same Indian flotilla that brought down the two Frenchmen to Quebec and by supplying the name of Groseilliers as one of the two explorers who are nameless in the Jesuit Relations.¹¹

There is hardly a writer on this subject who does not assert that Radisson and Groseilliers came west after 1660. Not a vestige of proof to support their assertions is adduced, and it is safe to say, the facts compel one to say, that the Lake Superior voyage which ended in 1660 was the last voyage that Radisson and Groseilliers made to the west.

Many writers, without advancing any proof in support of their statements, declare that Radisson and Groseilliers' Lake Superior voyage began in 1661 and ended in 1663. In the Journal of the Jesuits, which is unimpeachable authority, we find that Groseilliers was at Quebec in May, 1662, and this alone explodes the 1661-3 theory.

Other writers declare that Radisson and Groseilliers returned from their first western voyage in August, 1660, and started west again at once, not returning from their second and last voyage to the upper lakes until 1662, late in the summer. These writers overlook the fact of Groseilliers' presence in Quebec in May, 1662, and they also fail to account for the fact of an addition to the Groseilliers family in 1662.

In connection with this voyage, one more error remains to be pointed out, and in the history of the northwest there is not an error that is more widespread. I refer to the statement in many standard historical works, including Winsor's "Narrative and Critical History of America" and his "From Cartier to Frontenac," that Father Menard and Radisson and Groseilliers came west together in August, 1660. Father Menard, as a matter of fact, came west with the same Indians

11. "On the 17th [August] Monseigneur of Petrae [Laval, first bishop of Quebec] left for his visit * * * He arrived at Montreal on the 21st * * * where the Ottawas had arrived on the 19th. They were in number three hundred. Des Grosilleres was in their company, who had gone to them the year before. They had departed from Lake Superior with one hundred canoes; forty turned back, and sixty arrived, loaded with peltry to the value of 200,000 livres. At Montreal they left to the value of 50,000 livres, and brought the rest to Three Rivers. They come in twenty-six days, but are two months in going back. Des Grosilleres wintered with the Boeuf tribe, who were about four thousand, and belonged to the sedentary Nadoueseronons. The Father Menard, the Father Albanel, and six other Frenchmen went back with them."—Journal des Jesuites, par M. M. les Abbes Laverdier et Casgrain, Quebec, 1871. Father Albanel, persecuted and abandoned by the Indians, soon retraced his steps to the French settlement. Father Menard pushed onward and in August, 1661, perished in the forests of Northwestern Wisconsin.

who had accompanied Radisson and Groseilliers to the French settlements, upon their return from Lake Superior. Among Father Menard's companions were six or more Frenchmen, whose return to the lower St. Lawrence is chronicled by the Journal of the Jesuits under date of August 3, 1663. It has been shown that right in the middle of this period Groseilliers was at Quebec and in the proper place it will be shown what both he and Radisson were doing between 1660 and 1663.

It may be interesting at this point to trace the erroneous connection of Father Menard with Radisson and Groseilliers. The Journal of the Jesuits for August, 1660, already quoted, announces the arrival of the Indian flotilla from Lake Superior, incidentally mentions that Groseilliers was in their company, and adds that Father Menard "went back with them." By the words "with them" the Indians alone are meant, but the late Rev. E. D. Neill of Minnesota understood that the words meant the entire party which had just reached the French settlements, and he hurried our two voyageurs back to the west before they had had time to greet their kinsfolk. It is interesting to note that John Gilmary Shea, in a note to his edition of Charlevoix, published in 1868, when he did not have the aid of Radisson's narrative, as Dr. Neill did, interprets the entry in the Journal of the Jesuits correctly. "The party with whom Menard went," reads Shea's note, "came down with Groseilliers."

It is difficult either to accept or to reject Radisson's statement that he and Groseilliers, during their Lake Superior voyage, penetrated to Hudson's Bay. Radisson states that the Lake Superior voyage took two years, but neither the Jesuit Relations¹² nor the Journal of the Jesuits mentions more than one winter's stay in the west by our explorers. Moreover, Pierre-Esprit Radisson, on April 15, 1659, was godfather of a daughter of Groseilliers, Father Menard performing the ceremony. We have seen that there were two men named Pierre-Esprit Radisson at Three Rivers at that time and we might take it for granted that it was the elder Pierre who stood sponsor on this occasion were it not for the intimation in the Jesuit Relations and in the Journal of the Jesuits that both Radisson and Groseilliers were gone only a year on their Lake Superior voyage, which ended in August, 1660.

On the other hand, there is some evidence in support of Radisson's claim that he and Groseilliers did reach Hudson Bay from Lake Superior. Noël Jérémie, who commanded at Hudson Bay for the

12. "They passed the winter on the shores of Lake Superior, during which time they made several trips among the surrounding tribes. They saw, among other things, at six days' journey beyond the lake, toward the southwest, a tribe composed of the remainder of Hurons of the Tobacco Nation"—Jesuit relation for 1660. See also Smith's "History of Wisconsin," Vol. 111, pp. 20, 21.

French late in the seventeenth century, is authority for the statement that Groseilliers penetrated to Hudson Bay by way of Manitoba, and in Franquelin's map for 1688 Pigeon River, near the Grand Portage, on the north shore of Lake Superior, the route by which Manitoba and Hudson Bay are commonly reached by canoes, bears the name of Groseilliers.

The most difficult problem connected with the subject of Radisson and Groseilliers is encountered when one takes up the study of the first western voyage, during which Radisson claims that they descended the Mississippi River, but in this study our knowledge of the time that the second western voyage, the one to Lake Superior, came to an end, will be helpful.

Radisson states that a year intervened between the two western voyages, the one to the Mississippi being the first. But Radisson also states that he was a member of the French colony in the Onondaga country, which, the year after he joined it, escaped by strategy from being massacred by the Onondagas and other Iroquois. We have already seen that in effect he claims that he and Groseilliers were in the Lake Superior and Hudson Bay regions from 1658 to 1660 and the almost miraculous escape of the French colonists among the Onondagas, it is well known, occurred early in the year 1658, a short time before Radisson, according to his own account, must have started for Lake Superior with Groseilliers upon their second western voyage. Assuming that the first western voyage really did take place, we are forced to the conclusion that Radisson, for some purpose of his own, changed the order of his voyages, for, by the facts which have been adduced, the Onondaga voyage is interjected between the two western voyages, so that the first western voyage is thrown back to a period previous to 1657, the year that Radisson joined the Onondaga colony. Nor can the first western voyage be thrown back very far, for Radisson never saw New France until the spring of 1651; he was captured by the Mohawks in 1652 and he did not return from the Mohawk villages until the spring of 1654. This leaves the period of his life between the spring of 1654 and the spring of 1657 unaccounted for unless Radisson was west during that time. It was during that period that the two nameless voyageurs who followed in the footsteps of Jean Nicolet were in the Green Bay and Lake Michigan region. These nameless voyageurs started west early in August, 1654, and returned to the French settlements during the latter part of August, 1656. If Radisson and Groseilliers were west during this period, they were the two nameless voyageurs mentioned in the Jesuit Relations of 1656, and if they were not those nameless voyageurs, Radisson's first western voyage never took place.

For at that time the population of New France was not more than 2,000. In every settlement there was a Jesuit and every Jesuit in the country recorded every important incident that he saw or heard

and all was published in the Relations. It would have been impossible for any man, especially a man like Groseilliers, who had been in the service of the Jesuits, to start for the far west, be gone two years, or any other considerable length of time, and return to the French settlements without some record of the achievement finding its way into the Jesuit Relations. Therefore, Radisson and Groseilliers were the nameless voyageurs who were in the Lake Michigan country from 1654 to 1656, or else Radisson's narrative of his first western voyage is a fabrication from beginning to end.

Radisson says that he and Groseilliers, when they arrived at the mouth of French River, upon this voyage, turned south, passed the sites of the Jesuit missions among the Hurons near the mouth of the River Wye, Georgian Bay, and made a circuit of Lake Huron. After many days, storms on the lake compelling them to rest two or three days at a time, they arrived at a large island, beyond which, some three leagues, according to Radisson, was a strait that separated Lake Huron from another large lake. The other large lake is Lake Michigan and the large island is Bois Blanc,¹³ which has about thirty-five miles of shore line. Radisson and Groseilliers had Huron Indians with them and they found more Huron Indians on the large island. The Frenchmen spent the winter with the Pottawatamies, probably on the peninsula that divides Green Bay and Lake Michigan. The next spring they visited the Maskoutens, or Fire Nation. That summer, according to Radisson, they explored Lake Michigan, which he calls the "delightfullest lake of the world," and thence they went south. And they went very far south, too, if we are to believe Radisson. They reached a climate where it never snowed nor froze, where the earth brought forth its fruit twice a year. "Italy comes short of it," declares Radisson. He says that they met people that dwelt about the salt water, meaning the Gulf of Mexico, and that they found a barrel broken as the Spaniards break barrels. Radisson describes the Mississippi River and he states that he and Groseilliers navigated its waters.¹⁴ The second winter, according to Radisson, was spent between Sault Ste. Marie and the Pictured Rocks, for he says that they retired from the Sault farther into the upper lake, nearer the Sioux, but he does not speak of the Pictured Rocks until he records his second western voyage. Radisson's statement about going nearer the Sioux fixes the winter camp on the south shore, for had they gone over to the north shore, they would have been farther from the Sioux, who dwelt not far from the head of Lake Superior. Late in the winter, Radisson says, he and Groseilliers and 150 Indians traveled fifty leagues on snow shoes, came to the mouth of a river where they stopped to make boats,

13. See "Radisson's Journal: Its Value in History," in Wis. His. Society Proceedings for 1895.

14. *Ibid.*

ascended the river for eight days, visited the Pontonemick, probably Pottawattamies, and the Matoneck, and continued their journey until they reached what Radisson calls "the first landing isle." Does Radisson mean to state that they crossed the upper peninsula of Michigan, ascended the Fox River and made their way to Bald Island, in the Mississippi River?¹⁵ That long journey, which included fifty leagues on snow shoes, was remarkable, and Radisson's description of it plainly shows that the objective point could not be any of the islands in Lake Michigan or in Lake Huron. At the "first landing isle," Radisson and Groseilliers found many Hurons, in fact, the object of the journey seems to have been to find the Hurons, with whom Groseilliers had traded before the Iroquois had forced them to abandon their homes east of Georgian Bay. Radisson has recorded that during his southern trip of the summer before, he had tried to get his Huron companions to go with him to their countrymen who had fled to the land of the Sioux, meaning the upper Mississippi River. But it is very doubtful whether the Hurons had reached the Lake Pepin country at the time that Radisson says that he tried to persuade his Huron companions to go there and it is far from being certain that the Hurons had reached Lake Pepin even by the time that Radisson says that he and Groseilliers found them on an island—"the first landing isle."

There is little doubt that Radisson indulged in fabrication in regard to the Mississippi River and while the narrative of his first western voyage shows some knowledge of the movements of the Hurons, it is knowledge that he might have acquired when he visited them subsequently by way of Lake Superior, after they had quarreled with the Sioux and had begun to return eastward. He and Groseilliers did not start home from their first western voyage until the year following their arrival at the "first landing isle."

It is certain that even if Radisson and Groseilliers were the two nameless explorers of Lake Michigan between the years 1654 and 1656, part of Radisson's account of his first western voyage is fabricated. In three different places¹⁶ he tells us that the voyage took three years and he tells us where he spent three winters. The nameless voyageurs were gone only two years and we know that Radisson and Groseilliers could not have been gone for a longer period than two years, for their presence elsewhere before and after that period is accounted for. The nameless voyageurs started westward on August 6, 1654, while Radisson says that he and Groseilliers started westward about the middle of June. But he contradicts himself when he says that near Lake Nipissing, two weeks' journey from their starting place, he picked blackberries that were nearly ripe. In the northern lake country, blackberries are ripe about September 1, and the two nameless voyageurs, who

15. *Ibid.*

16. Radisson's *Voyages*, pp. 134, 157, 170.

started west on August 6, would have found them nearly ripe when they reached Lake Nipissing. This also tends to show that Radisson and Groseilliers may have been the two nameless voyageurs of 1654-56.

Radisson says that twenty-nine Frenchmen started west with him and Groseilliers, but were driven back by the Iroquois; that he had an encounter with the Iroquois on the Ottawa in returning, and he records that 500 Indians under his command fought a battle with the Iroquois and repulsed them near Three Rivers, after his return. In the Jesuit Relations we read of no such incidents in connection with the nameless explorers.

Radisson says that the Indians who came back with him numbered 500, while the Relations state that only 250 Indians accompanied the nameless voyageurs upon their homeward journey. Radisson says that the Indians who brought him home returned without encountering the enemy, while in the Relations we read that the Indians who had accompanied the nameless explorers to the French settlements were attacked by the Iroquois and that Father Garreau, who was going west with them, was mortally wounded in the encounter.

But these contradictions relate to the beginning and to the end of the journey, and if Radisson and Groseilliers were the two nameless voyageurs of the Jesuit Relations, the discrepancies mentioned may be explained by what would be the fact that Radisson added two months to the beginning of his journey, saying that they started in June, whereas it was August, and added a year to the end of it. Having added fourteen months to the time that his voyage actually took, he must have added, to that part of his narrative which is true, an account of exploring territory which he did not explore. In all the territory that is described in his fourth voyage, what would be so likely to tempt him to falsehood as the discovery of the Mississippi River? Inasmuch as Radisson has impeached his own testimony, there is no good ground for accepting his claim to the discovery of the Mississippi River. Under the circumstances the honor of discovering the Mississippi cannot justly be taken away from Joliet and Marquette.

Excluding the Mississippi, the territory that Radisson and Groseilliers explored is identical with the territory traversed by the nameless explorers of 1654-6. Both visited the Pottawattamies and the Maskoutens, and both spent some time on Lake Michigan as well as at Green Bay and in the Fox River country. Both speak of the Sioux and the Christinoes, although in his narrative Radisson does not mention the Winnebagoes and the Illinois, of whom we read, in connection with the nameless explorers, in the Jesuit Relations. The return of Radisson and Groseilliers, as well as that of the nameless voyageurs, caused great joy in New France, both being greeted with salvos of artillery from the fortress at Quebec, and the actual condi-

tion of the French colony at that time was such¹⁷ as to make the furs brought by Radisson and Groseilliers seem like a godsend, as Radisson says that they were.

It is very significant that the whereabouts of Radisson during 1654-6 cannot be accounted for from his journal unless his first western voyage took place during that period, and it is equally significant that there is no trace of Groseilliers in the French settlements between February, 1654,¹⁸ when he was sergeant-major of the garrison at Three Rivers, and September 29, 1656,¹⁹ when he was again at Three Rivers, while before the period of the voyage to Lake Michigan by the two nameless Frenchmen, as well as after it, the whereabouts of both Radisson and Groseilliers can be traced with precision. It is settled beyond doubt that Radisson and Groseilliers were the explorers of Lake Superior who remained nameless so long and there is certainly good reason for believing that they were identical with the nameless voyageurs who spent two years near Lake Michigan in the middle of the seventeenth century.

Of necessity we have considered the first western voyage after reviewing the second western voyage, and we now take up the thread of the story of Radisson and Groseilliers at the time of their return to Quebec from the latter—the voyage to Lake Superior. One of the most interesting chapters of American history is before us and it is not American history alone, for, in addition to the picturesque settlements of New France and the Boston of more than two centuries ago, and the frozen regions of Hudson Bay, the courts of France and England figure in the story.

Radisson and Groseilliers had gone to Lake Superior against the governor's wishes and when they returned they lost most of their valuable furs by confiscation, a mode of punishment probably profitable to the governor. Groseilliers, in the fall of 1660, the season that ships usually left for France, went to Paris to obtain justice. He could not have returned before the following spring or early summer.²⁰ He spent six months in France, unsuccessful at court, but came back with the promise of a Rochelle merchant to send a ship the following spring to take him and Radisson to Hudson Bay. Disappointed by the Rochelle merchant, they engaged with some Boston merchants to undertake a voyage to Hudson Bay, and in the spring of 1663 they started for the region which, on account of its richness in furs, they longed

17. The Jesuit relations state that in 1653 the keeper of the store at Montreal had not bought a beaver skin in a year, that the Hurons kept away from Canada and that the Algonkin country was dispeopled. The fur trade with the Indians, it should be remembered, was the life of the colony.

18. *Sulte*.

19. *Ibid*.

20. "The ships from France arrived at Quebec in July, August or September, and returned in November"—Parkman, "The Old Regime in Canada."

to reach; but at Hudson Straits the captain turned back, his plea being a shortness of provisions. At Boston they made another engagement to go to Hudson Bay, merchants agreeing to equip two ships for them. The ships were not furnished and litigation with the Boston merchants resulted, our adventurers being unsuccessful. This must have been in 1664. The following year some of the English commissioners appointed to attend to the evacuation of New York by the Dutch induced the two Frenchmen to go from Boston to the court of England and urge the establishment of fur-trading centers at Hudson Bay, which, although it had been explored many years before by English navigators, including Hudson and Button, had never been settled by any nation.

In England, Radisson and Groseilliers won the favor of Prince Rupert and were granted an audience by Charles II, who at that time, on account of the plague in London, held court at Oxford. The king granted the adventurers forty shillings a week and chambers at Windsor and promised them a ship in the spring of 1666. But it was not until 1668 that the proposed expedition to Hudson's Bay started, and then a storm drove Radisson's ship, the *Eagle*, Capt. Stannard, back to England, while the *Nonsuch*, which bore Groseilliers and was commanded by Capt. Zachary Gillam, went on to Hudson's Bay. The result of the expedition was the establishment during the same year of a fort at the mouth of the Nemiskau River, now known as Rupert's River, at the head of James Bay, where Fort Rupert stands to-day. The following year Radisson himself took possession of Port Nelson in the name of the English king. It was in 1668, after being forced back to England, that Radisson finished his account of his Lake Superior voyage.

Our two adventurers thus became the promoters of the Hudson's Bay company, which was chartered in 1670 by Charles II, Prince Rupert being at the head of it. The company was given exclusive possession of Hudson's Bay and of all the territory drained by the streams running into it. In return for this royal grant, Charles II modestly stipulated that the company was to give him every year two elks and two black beavers.

About the time that the Hudson's Bay Company was chartered, Radisson married a daughter of John Kirke, one of the charter members of the company, and a descendant of one of the Kirkes who in 1629 forced Champlain to surrender Quebec to the English. Some time after the incorporation of the Hudson Bay Company, John Kirke was knighted by Charles II. Radisson had never married in New France, as many writers have stated, Kirke's daughter being his first and only wife.

At Hudson Bay, in the employ of the English, Radisson and Groseilliers continued to exert a great deal of influence upon the region of

the upper lakes. In his paper on Nicholas Perrot, the first paper read before this club, Mr. Stickney has described the great gathering of northwestern Indians held in 1671, as a result of the efforts of Perrot, at Sault Ste. Marie, where Saint-Lusson took possession of the northwest for Louis XIV. The presence of Radisson and Groseilliers at Hudson's Bay, in the interest of the English, was the main reason for that gathering. Under date of November 10, 1670, Talon, the intendant of New France, wrote to Colbert, the French minister of marine, that the Indians had reported that two ships had been seen in Hudson Bay. Talon told Colbert that he suspected that the English, led by Groseilliers, were at Hudson's Bay, and he announced his resolution to send trustworthy men to invite the Indians of that region to come down and trade with the French. Perrot and Saint-Lusson had started for the west the month before Talon's letter was written, but ships usually left Quebec for France in November, which is probably the reason that Talon's letter to Colbert was not written sooner. Talon's next step was to send Father Albanel, a Jesuit, and Sieur Denys de St. Simon to Hudson's Bay by way of the Saguenay River. They started in 1671, wintered near Lake St. John and reached James Bay in 1672. Father Albanel, who saw an English boat and two English houses, but no Englishmen, went through the ceremony of taking possession of the country in the name of France.

On May 29, 1673, Father Nouvel, superior of the Ottawa mission, wrote from Sault Ste. Marie to Frontenac, the governor of New France, that Groseilliers and the English had attracted much Indian trade to Hudson's Bay, and that Indians had reported to him that two ships had just arrived at the bay during the previous year, that the English feared that a third ship had been wrecked, and that the English were preparing to hold a grand council with the Indians around Hudson's Bay. Father Nouvel stated that the enterprise of the English at Hudson's Bay was a material detriment to the colony of New France.

The result of this letter was that Father Albanel was again sent to Hudson's Bay. He started late in 1673 and wintered near Lake St. John, where he was severely injured in an accident. He was helpless for a time and was abandoned by the Indians who were to guide him to Hudson's Bay, and by the French who were to be his companions. But the following year, notwithstanding all these discouraging circumstances, and although he heard reports that the English would kill him if he approached them, he pushed onward.

The arrival of Father Albanel at Hudson's Bay is announced in a journal kept by Thomas Gorst, secretary to Charles Baily, the English governor. ²¹Gorst states that on August 3d, 1674, a mis-

21. Oldmixon, "British Empire."

sionary Jesuit arrived, bearing a letter from the governor of Quebec to Baily, dated October 8, 1673, and that in the letter Baily was asked to treat the priest courteously, on account of the great amity existing between the two crowns. Gorst adds that the priest "brought a letter, also, for Capt. Groseilliers, which gave jealousy to the English of his corresponding with the French." And well it might, for it is reasonable to suspect that it was the letter to Groseilliers, not the letter to the English governor asking that he be treated civilly, which caused Father Albanel to perform that long, difficult and perilous journey. Radisson states that he and Groseilliers left the English service in that same year, whether as a result of Father Albanel's persuasion, or the suspicions of the English, or both, it is hard to divine. A few years later we find Father Albanel in the west, at the head of the missions around Green Bay. He deservedly occupies a high place among the Jesuit missionaries of New France.

Radisson and Groseilliers were pardoned by Louis XIV. and they re-appeared in New France in 1678. Frontenac had no employment for them, however, and Radisson joined the French fleet which reduced the island of Tobago and other Dutch possessions in the West Indies. Groseilliers remained with his family at Three Rivers. In 1681, after he had twice visited England to persuade his wife to live with him in France, Radisson appeared again at Quebec and entered the service of the Company of the North. He and Groseilliers were placed in command of two ships and sailed for Hudson's Bay to plant a French establishment. They anchored in Hayes River. They had many adventures, including the capture of the English governor, one Bridger. The ship which had brought Bridger to the bay was commanded by Capt. Zachary Gillam, who commanded the ship that had brought Groseilliers to Hudson's Bay in 1668. In the winter of 1682-3 Gillam's ship was crushed by the ice and he was drowned. His son, who had charge of a Boston ship, was captured by the French by strategy and his vessel was seized. Leaving a son of Groseilliers in charge at Port Nelson, and sending Bridger to James Bay, Radisson and Groseilliers went to Quebec. De la Barre, the governor of New France, returned the Boston ship to its owners, and for so doing was reprimanded by Seignelay, the French minister of marine, who said the English would not fail to use the surrender of the ship to strengthen their claim to Nelson River.

On April 10, 1684, Louis XIV wrote to de la Barre that the English king had complained to him about the acts of Radisson and Groseilliers. The French king suggested to his representative in New France that it would be well to propose to the commandant at Hudson Bay that neither the French nor the English should have power

*cette lettre du Père
Albanel pourrait
bien être la source
de l'antipathie
qu'il lui fit vers
de ce temps pour le tiers
des services des Anglais
(Acquis. 10 avril 1684)*

to make any new establishments in that region, the wily monarch adding that the proposition would no doubt be readily accepted, as the English had no power to prevent his subjects from forming establishments at Nelson River, at that time a French possession. De la Barre probably sent this dispatch to Hudson's Bay by way of Lake Superior, for in the summer of 1684, Du Luth, one of the most noted of French bushrangers, was in the upper lake country, and wrote to de la Barre that he had received the dispatches for young Groseilliers at Nelson River and that in compliance with the French governor's order to omit no step to ensure the prompt delivery of the dispatches, one Pere,²² a noted *coureur de bois*, would leave at once for Hudson's Bay.

It was late in 1683 when Radisson and Groseilliers returned to Quebec from Hudson's Bay and a few weeks later they were in Paris. Lord Preston, the English ambassador, who had been complaining about their acts at Hudson's Bay, induced them to re-enter the Hudson's Bay Company's service. Radisson, leaving Groseilliers in England, sailed at once for Hudson's Bay, and took possession for the French post at Nelson River, as well as of a large quantity of valuable furs which the French had obtained since the previous year. Young Groseilliers, according to Radisson, promptly surrendered the post. The furs taken from the French were valued at from 300,000 to 400,000 livres. Radisson went back to London the same year.

It is recorded that in 1685 Radisson and his nephew had gone up Hayes, or St. Therese, River, intending to spend the winter. In 1686 de Troyes and Iberville, with a company of other French-Canadians, captured Forts Hayes, Rupert and Albany. Denonville, in a letter to his superiors, afterward stated that he had ordered de Troyes to capture only the fort which contained Radisson, for whom a reward had been authorized. The expedition did not capture Radisson, however, for in the month of March, 1687, Louis XIV himself wrote to Denonville that Radisson had done a great deal of harm to the colony and was likely to do more. He advised the capture of Radisson, and if he could not be captured, he suggested that an attempt be made to prevail upon him to leave the English service, and to this end the king authorized the governor and the intendant of New France to make any suitable terms with him. Thus Radisson had become the cause of a great monarch's anxiety.

Radisson and Groseilliers were traitors both to France and to England, but their love of gold was mixed with a love of adventure, with great ambition, and it may be doubted whether New France ever contained two bolder, more enterprising spirits.

22. Kingsford, "The History of Canada," states that the English detained Pere and that in 1686, when de Troyes and Iberville demanded that he be surrendered to them, they were told that he had been sent to France. Moose River, leading to Hudson Bay, formerly bore Pere's name.

There seems to be little doubt that both of them died in England,²⁰ far from their native land, farther from the scenes of their memorable achievements.

HENRY COLIN CAMPBELL.

23. Charlevoix says that Grosseilliers died in Canada and Radisson in England. Dionne asserts that Grosseilliers also died in England and he is supported by the fact that the *Dictionnaire genealogique des familles canadiennes* does not contain any mention of Grosseilliers' last days. Besides, the last that is known of Grosseilliers he was in England, an old man, and under all the circumstances it is most reasonable to suppose that he died in that country.

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NOTE—In regard to the movements of the Hurons, an important subject in connection with the explorations by Radisson and Groseilliers, the leading authorities are Nicholas Perrot's *Memoirs*, the *Jesuit Relations* and the Rev. Father Verwest's *Missionary Labors of Marquette, Menard and Allouez*. The *Jesuit Relations* are of course the best authority as to the deeds of the members of that order.